**General Education Course Inclusion Proposal**

**PERSEPCTIVES ON SOCIETY**

*This proposal form is intended for departments proposing a course for inclusion in the Northern Michigan University General Education Program. Courses in a component satisfy both the Critical Thinking and the component learning outcomes. Departments should complete this form and submit it electronically through the General Education SHARE site.*

**Course Name and Number:** PS309 State and Local Government

**Home Department:** Political Science

**Department Chair Name and Contact Information** (phone, email):

Carter Wilson, ext.: 1502, [carwilso@nmu.edu](mailto:carwilso@nmu.edu)

**Expected frequency of Offering of the course** (e.g. every semester, every fall): Every semester.

**Official Course Status**: Has this course been approved by CUP and Senate? YES

*Courses that have not yet been approved by CUP must be submitted to CUP prior to review by GEC. Note that GEC is able to review courses that are in the process of approval; however, inclusion in the General Education Program is dependent upon Senate and Academic Affairs approval of the course into the overall curriculum.*

**Overview of course** (please attach a current syllabus as well): *Please limit the overview to two pages (not including the syllabus)*

1. Overview of the course content:

This course is designed to provide students with an overview of state and local governments. It is divided into several parts. The first part will exam the history of the formation of states and local governments and their role and functions in the system of federalism. Students will learn that initially, state governments provided most domestic policies and local governments were small and weak. The second part will provide a typology of city and state governments. It will distinction among strong mayors, weak mayors, city managers, and commission forms. This part will also distinguish among different city legislative bodies: wards, districts, at large and others. It will also provide a description of the various different forms of state governments, distinguishable in terms of all three branches of governments: the type of legislative body, whether unicameral or bicameral, the chief executive, whether strong or weak, and the selection of judges, whether by appointment, election or bar recommendations. The third part will exam the major functions of local government: protection of persons and property, roads and transportation, land use, economic development, health and sanitation, education and many others. The fourth part will examine the politics of state governments. This part will focus on political participation, political parties, campaigns and elections. The fifth part will focus on state policies and the relations among national, state and local governments.

1. Explain why this course satisfies the Component specified and significantly addresses both learning outcomes: Learning outcomes in this course include both critical thinking and perspectives on society.

Critical theory

In this course, students learn about state governments within a federal system. That is, they learn about changes in the balance of power overtime between the national/federal government and the state governments, the impact of the U.S. Constitution on the relationship between the states and the federal government. They learn how the state constitutions provide the legal framework for the organization and functions of state governments. They learn how state governments are similar and different in terms of demographics, governmental powers and functions, party organizations and political processes.

Evidence: Students will learn specific factual information about state governments: the organization of state governments, the principles of state constitutions, the patterns and processes of state politics and the forms of state public policies.

Integrate: Students will learn not only about different factual information, but the manner in which differences in values and world views affect differences in public policy choices and party affiliations. Students will understand the association between differences in state characteristics such as demographics, governmental organization, party organization and political and differences in state public policy outcomes.

Evaluate: Students will use differences in world views and value orientations to evaluate differences in political behavior and policy outcomes.

Overall, students will learn about the importance of evidence and data in the study of state and local governments and political issues. They will learn how to use evidence and data in developing coherent analysis of governments and issues. They will learn to develop clear and cogent arguments.

Perspectives on Society

This course is designed to meet all of the rubric requirements for perspectives on society: analysis of society, ethical issues and development and context of society. It focuses on the structure and organization of state and local governments. It covers ethical and social issues. It identifies and provides examples of the historical development of state and local governments. It teaches students to analyze human organizations. It encourages students to become engaged in the political process.

1. Describe the target audience (level, student groups, etc.): The target audience focuses on freshmen and sophomores, but includes all undergraduates.

The target audience is freshmen and sophomores, as this is a three hundred level course.

1. Give information on other roles this course may serve (e.g. University Requirement, required for a major(s), etc.): This course also satisfies the Division IV Liberal Studies Component: “foundation of social science.”

This course is required for the public administration political science and the current interdisciplinary undergraduate degree in public administration.

E. Provide any other information that may be relevant to the review of the course by GEC. See attached syllabus.

**PLAN FOR LEARNING OUTCOMES  
CRITICAL THINKING**

*Attainment of the CRITICAL THINKING Learning Outcome is required for courses in this component. There are several dimensions to this learning outcome. Please complete the following Plan for Assessment with information regarding course assignments (type, frequency, importance) that will be used by the department to assess the attainment of students in each of the dimensions of the learning outcome. Type refers to the types of assignments used for assessment such as written work, presentations, etc. Frequency refers to the number of assignments included such as a single paper or multiple papers. Importance refers to the relative emphasis or weight of the assignment to the entire course. For each dimension, please specify the expected success rate for students completing the course that meet the proficiency level and explain your reasoning. Please refer to the Critical Thinking Rubric for more information on student performance/proficiency in this area. Note that courses are expected to meaningfully address all dimensions of the learning outcome.*

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| **DIMENSION** | **DIMENSION GUIDANCE** | **PLAN FOR ASSESSMENT** |
| **Evidence** | Assesses quality of information that may be integrated into an argument | Evidence as a critical thinking learning outcomes will be assessed using a term paper, student presentations ~~and class discussions~~. Term papers will be graded on the basis of the quality of the evidence presented and how well factual information presented in the paper is documented. Student performance in class presentations ~~and class discussions~~ will be judged on the basis of the accuracy of evidence and information used to support positions and arguments presented in the presentations and discussions. Eighty percent of the students will demonstrate proficiency ~~in all three critical thinking dimensions~~ in this area. The professor grading the papers will determine proficiency. |
| **Integrate** | Integrates insight and or reasoning with previous understanding to reach informed conclusions and/or understanding | Integrated thinking learning outcomes will be assessed using a term paper, student presentations ~~and class discussions~~. Term papers will be graded on the basis of how well students integrate factual evidence into world views to assess political processes and outcomes. Student performance in class presentations ~~and class discussions~~ will be judged on the basis of students’ ability to integrate evidence into conceptual frameworks in evaluating political processes and policy outcomes. Faculty assessment of student performance will determine proficiency. We expect 75 percent of the students to demonstrate proficiency in this dimension of critical thinking. |
| **Evaluate** | Evaluates information, ideas, and activities according to established principles and guidelines | Evaluation dimension of critical thinking learning outcomes will be assessed through term paper, presentations and discussions. Papers, presentations and discussions will be assessed on the basis of how well students use evidence integrated in conceptual frameworks to evaluate political organizations, processes, behavior and outcomes. We expect 75 percent of our students to demonstrate proficiency in this dimension. |

**PLAN FOR LEARNING OUTCOMES  
PERSPECTIVES ON SOCIETY**

*Attainment of the PERSPECTIVES ON SOCIETY Learning Outcome is required for courses in this component. There are several dimensions to this learning outcome. Please complete the following Plan for Assessment with information regarding course assignments (type, frequency, importance) that will be used by the department to assess the attainment of students in each of the dimensions of the learning outcome. Type refers to the types of assignments used for assessment such as written work, presentations, etc. Frequency refers to the number of assignments included such as a single paper or multiple papers. Importance refers to the relative emphasis or weight of the assignment to the entire course. For each dimension, please specify the expected success rate for students completing the course that meet the proficiency level and explain your reasoning. Please refer to the Rubric for more information on student performance/proficiency in this learning outcome. Note that courses are expected to meaningfully address all dimensions of the learning outcome.*

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| **DIMENSION** | **DIMENSION GUIDANCE** | **PLAN FOR ASSESSMENT** |
| **Analysis of society** | Synthesis and analysis of social structures and processes or events | Learning outcomes will be assessed using three exams. The exams will be both multiple choice and essay. Designated ~~multiple choice and~~ essay questions from these exams will be used to assess proficiency in the ability to assess the different forms of state and local governments, the organization and processes of state and local governments. We expect that 80% of the students will demonstrate proficiency in these areas. Proficiency will be judged by the instructor. A basis essay question that assesses the synthesis and analysis of social structures and processes would be to ask students to explain the associations among 1) the level of the urbanization and economic development of a state, 2) the level of the development of state administrative organizations (education, transportation, economic development), 3) type of public policies and 4) the quality of the life of citizens. |
| **Ethical Issues** | Addressing ethical issues in society | Select essay questions on three exams will be used to assess students’ ability to address ethical issues in society. We expect 80% of the students to demonstrate proficiency in this area, as judged by the instructor grading the exams. There are many essay questions that assess the ability of students to identify ethical issues and their impacts on society. What political and social factors explain why some states have increased spending for prisons and decreased spending for higher education? Why has states like Alabama passed laws prohibiting drivers from giving rides to undocumented immigrants while a number of urban areas have passed resolutions declaring themselves sanctuary cities? |
| **Development and context of society** | Explore themes in the development of human society | Essay questions will be used to assess the ability of students to identify historical and contemporary themes pertaining to the development and organization of state and local governments. We expect 80% of the students to demonstrate proficiency in this area, as judged by the instructor grading the exams. There are many essay questions that assess the extent to which students are able to identify basic historical and contemporary themes pertaining to human development and human organizations and their effect within human society and the natural world. What factors affect the economic development of state and local governments? What effect does the level of economic development have on the development of public policies that improve life chances and the quality of life? |